

Ervin Reveals Ex-Agent's Charges Army Spied on Illinois Officials

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Army intelligence was accused yesterday of spying on Sen. Adlai E. Stevenson III, former Gov. Otto Kerner, Democratic Rep. Abner Mikva and 800 other civilians in Illinois during the last two years.

Sen. Sam J. Ervin (D-N.C.), chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, told the Senate the charges were made by a former Army intelligence agent who operated out of a Chicago field office from June, 1969, through last June. The agent, who subsequently was identi-

fied as John M. O'Brien of Evanston, Ill., will appear before Ervin's subcommittee in February.

Ervin demanded the Army fully explain its domestic spying operations and give assurances it would immediately stop them.

On the basis of O'Brien's accusations, Ervin said the Army investigated Illinois political figures "during their campaign for office and while they were in office... apparently anyone who in the Army's definition was 'left of center' was a prospective can-

didate for political surveillance."

Army General Counsel Robert E. Jordan III said the Defense Department is "gravely concerned" about the allegations and is investigating them.

He said that "current army policy" prohibits collection of this type of information. He added that new policies issued during the last two years confine intelligence activities to a narrow scope that prohibits gathering information on political activities or political leaders.

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It was learned that Ervin received O'Brien's letter last Wednesday. The former staff sergeant said his unit's intelligence duties changed from strictly military functions to investigations of anyone—including elected officials on all levels—who espoused discontent with military involvement in Southeast Asia or opposed the Nixon administration's domestic policies.

Ervin qualified his presentation of O'Brien's charges with an "if true" clause. He told the Senate that he had new information, "which, if true, gives yet more details of the military intelligence activities that have been directed at the American people." He added, "I certainly hope that the information... is not true..."

O'Brien said copies of his unit's information were sent to Fort Holabird, Md., an intelligence collection point that has been a target of Sen. Ervin for the last year. O'Brien said his superiors justified their doing the work on grounds that civilian intelligence units did not have enough personnel.

The senator was impressed by O'Brien's letter, according to an aide who subsequently talked to the ex-GI by telephone. The aide said that O'Brien is unemployed and talked about returning to college or finding a job in the security field.

A copy of the letter to Sen. Ervin went to Jared Stout of Newhouse News Service, who has previously written on the

domestic side of military intelligence gathering. O'Brien told Stout in an interview that he was a "domestic" spy for the army until his honorable discharge June 8, 1970.

But O'Brien told the reporter that he personally didn't spy on elected officials; his task involving antiwar protest groups that included Students for a Democratic Society and the Chicago Peace Council.

O'Brien said the information that he passed onto Ervin came from his recollection of files he had seen.

The undercover agent said he became disenchanted with his unit's work when Stevenson was designated as a surveillance target in September, 1969. Stevenson, then state treasurer, held a picnic at his Libertyville, Ill., farm with guests that included Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley and Jesse Jackson, a Chicago Negro leader.

O'Brien said an army undercover operative took a picture of Jackson whispering into Stevenson's ear. Subsequently, he said, agents covered every appearance of Stevenson in Chicago "at least up to June, 1970."

He said Mikva came under scrutiny because of "his outspoken criticism of war policy and because he aided draft resisters."

At the White House, Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler said it was "inconceivable" to the President that the surveillance took place, adding: "We certainly don't condone it."